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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State to adopt new regional purchasing system for physical and behavioral health services

New regional service areas designated by DSHS and HCA

OLYMPIA – Two Washington state agencies working together on health system transformation announced yesterday they are jointly designating common regional service areas for the purchasing of Medicaid and state funded physical and behavioral health services (mental health and substance use disorder). The Health Care Authority (HCA) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) have been working closely with community and delivery system partners on this initiative.

Regional service areas are geographic boundaries through which physical and behavioral health care services will be purchased by the state, starting in 2016, and can comprise a single county or multiple counties.

The regional service area designation was directed by the Legislature earlier this year with the passage of Senate Bill 6312, which directed the state to regionalize its Medicaid purchasing approach.

Washington State Medicaid Director MaryAnne Lindeblad said the regional service area designation is a first step towards achieving a healthier Washington.

“Achieving better health and better care in Washington starts by coordinating and integrating the health care delivery system with community services, social services, and public health,” Lindeblad said. “By jointly designating these regional service areas, we are better aligning our state purchasing and health care transformation efforts across common regions. These RSAs will serve as the foundation for health and community linkages at the regional level and promote shared accountability for the health and well-being of residents.”

“We want to organize our health care system around the needs of the people we serve. For people with complex care needs that cross our medical and mental health systems, common regional service areas will bring together the expertise of many community partners to support improved health,” said Jane Beyer, assistant secretary, DSHS Behavioral Health and Service Integration Administration.

HCA and DSHS based their designations on guidance received by the Legislature’s [Adult Behavioral Health System Task Force](#), and on feedback received from community stakeholders across the state. The RSA geographic boundaries were assessed by the degree to which they:

- Support naturally occurring health care delivery system and community service referral patterns across contiguous counties;

- Reflect active collaboration with community planning that prioritizes the health and well-being of residents;
- Include a critical mass of beneficiaries (60,000 covered Medicaid lives) to ensure active and sustainable participation by health insurance companies that serve whole region;
- Ensure access to adequate provider networks, consider typical utilization and travel patterns, consider the availability of specialty services and the continuity of care;
- Avoid disruption of business relationships that have evolved over time.

The RSA designation will also provide a framework for the evolution of a community role in Medicaid and state funded health care purchasing, occurring through the Accountable Communities of Health introduced in concept via the [Washington State Health Care Innovation Plan](#). Later this month, the Health Care Authority will release a grant opportunity announcement to support the evolution of Accountable Communities of Health, which will be aligned regionally with the RSAs.

For more information and background

[Early Adopter Transition](#)

[Behavioral Health Organizations](#)

Washington State Health Care Innovation Plan: [Healthier Washington](#)

[Accountable Communities of Health](#)

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